IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-46 (Canceled).

Claim 47 (Currently Amended): A ceramic body ~~with~~ having a high specific surface area, comprising at least one ceramic particle, wherein ~~at least a portion of~~ the ceramic particle comprises ~~the ceramic particles contains~~ at least Si, Al, and Mg and has a needle-shaped morphology; the ceramic body comprises a porous cordierite body that is stable at a high temperature and has a high surface area; the porous body as a whole comprises a needle-shaped crystal phase; the ceramic particle has a three-dimensional bonding of needle-shaped crystals formed by treatment with weak acid at a stage in which the needle-shaped crystal is deposited and thereby has a high specific surface area of at least 1 m^2/g; and the ceramic particle resists sintering-induced diminution of the specific area when being subjected to the high temperature of 1000°C or more.

Claim 48 (Currently Amended): A ceramic body ~~with~~ having a high specific surface area, wherein at least a portion of the surface of the ceramic body is coated with at least one ceramic particle ~~ceramic particles~~ that ~~contain~~ comprises at least Si, Al, and Mg and have a needle-shaped morphology; the ceramic body comprises a porous cordierite body that is stable at a high temperature and has a high surface area; the porous body as a whole comprises a needle-shaped crystal phase; the ceramic particle has a three-dimensional bonding of needle-shaped crystals formed by treatment with weak acid at a stage in which the needle-shaped crystal is deposited and thereby has a high specific surface area of at least 1

m^2/g; and the ceramic particle resists sintering-induced diminution of the specific area when being subjected to the high temperature of 1000°C or more.

Claim 49 (Currently Amended): A ceramic body ~~with~~ having a high specific surface area in which at least one ceramic particle ~~a portion of the ceramic particles contains~~ comprises at least Si, Al, and Mg and has a needle-shaped morphology, wherein at least one selected from the group consisting of pores and elements capable of directly supporting a catalyst component is present on the surface of the ceramic particle ~~particles~~; the ceramic body comprises a porous cordierite body that is stable at a high temperature and has a high surface area; the porous body as a whole comprises a needle-shaped crystal phase; the ceramic particle has a three-dimensional bonding of needle-shaped crystals formed by treatment with weak acid at a stage in which the needle-shaped crystal is deposited and thereby has a high specific surface area of at least 1 m^2/g; and the ceramic particle resists sintering-induced diminution of the specific area when being subjected to the high temperature of 1000°C or more.

Claim 50 (Currently Amended): A ceramic body having ~~with~~ a high specific surface area in which at least a portion of the surface of the ceramic body is coated with at least one ceramic particle~~particles~~ that ~~contain~~ comprise at least Si, Al, and Mg and have a needle-shaped morphology, wherein at least one selected from the group consisting of pores and elements capable of directly supporting a catalyst component is present on the surface of the ceramic particles; the ceramic body comprises a porous cordierite body that is stable at a high temperature and has a high surface area; the porous body as a whole comprises a needle-shaped crystal phase; the ceramic particle has a three-dimensional bonding of needle-shaped crystals formed by treatment with weak acid at a stage in which the needle-shaped crystal is

deposited and thereby has a high specific surface area of at least 1 m^2/g; and the ceramic particle resists sintering-induced diminution of the specific area when being subjected to the high temperature of 1000°C or more.

Claim 51 (Currently Amended): The ceramic body according to claim 49, wherein the pores comprise at least one selected from the group consisting of defects in the crystal lattice of the ceramic particles, microcracks at the surface of the ceramic particles, and a deficiency of an element that constitutes the ceramic particle ~~particles~~.

Claim 52 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 51, comprising microcracks having a width not greater than 100 nm.

Claim 53 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 51, wherein the pores have a diameter or width that is not more than 1000 times the diameter of the catalyst ion to be supported and the pore number thereof is at least 1×10^{11} per liter.

Claim 54 (Currently Amended): The ceramic body according to claim 51, wherein the pores comprise defects formed by the replacement of a portion of a constituent element of the ceramic particle ~~particles~~ with a metal element that has a different valence.

Claim 55 (Currently Amended): The ceramic body according to claim 54, wherein the defects comprise at least one selected from the group consisting of oxygen defects and lattice defects and the ceramic body comprises ~~contains~~ at least 4×10^{-6}% ceramic crystals having at least one defect in the unit crystal lattice of the needle-shaped particle ~~particles~~.

Claim 56 (Currently Amended): The ceramic body according to claim 49, wherein at least one element or more constituting the needle-shaped particle ~~particles~~ of the ceramic body is substituted by an element other than a constituent element and the ceramic body is capable of directly supporting a catalyst component by ~~via~~ the substitute element.

Claim 57 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 56, wherein the catalyst component is supported on the substitute element by chemical bonding.

Claim 58 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 56, wherein the substitute element is at least one element or more that has a d or f orbital in electron orbitals thereof.

Claim 59 (Currently Amended): The ceramic body according to claim 47, wherein the needle-shaped particle comprises ~~particles contain~~ Si, Al, and Mg and at least one species ~~from among at least~~ of Sr and Ce.

Claim 60 (Currently Amended): The ceramic body according to claim 47, wherein the needle-shaped particle is ~~particles are~~ cordierite.

Claim 61 (Currently Amended): The ceramic body according to claim 60, wherein at least five unit crystal lattice units from the surface of the needle-shaped particle ~~particles~~ are cordierite.

Claim 62 (Currently Amended): The ceramic body according to claim 47, wherein the aspect ratio of the needle-shaped particle ~~particles~~ is at least 5.

Claim 63 (Currently Amended): The ceramic body according to claim 47, wherein the ceramic body ~~takes the form of~~ has a form of particles, pellets, a nonwoven fabric, or a honeycomb.

Claim 64 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 47, wherein the specific surface area of the ceramic body is at least 1 m^2/g.

Claim 65 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 63, comprising a ceramic honeycomb with a porosity of at least 10%.

Claim 66 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 63, wherein the porosity of the ceramic body is at least 30%.

Claim 67 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 63, comprising a ceramic honeycomb that has a coefficient of thermal expansion in the flow channel direction of not more than $2 \times 10^{-6}/°C$.

Claim 68 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 63, comprising a ceramic honeycomb that has a coefficient of thermal expansion in the flow channel direction of not more than $1 \times 10^{-6}/°C$.

Claim 69 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 63, comprising a ceramic honeycomb that has a crush strength in the flow channel direction of at least 5 MPa.

Claim 70 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 63, comprising a ceramic honeycomb that has a crush strength in the flow channel direction of at least 10 MPa.

Claim 71 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 63, comprising a ceramic honeycomb that has a cell wall thickness of not more than 400 μm.

Claim 72 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 71, comprising a ceramic honeycomb that has a cell wall thickness of not more than 100 μm.

Claim 73 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 63, comprising a ceramic honeycomb that has a narrow pore distribution width.

Claim 74 (Previously Presented): The ceramic body according to claim 73, wherein at least 50% of the pore volume is encompassed by the distribution width within ± 1/2 of the value of the average pore diameter.

Claim 75 (Currently Amended): ~~The~~ A ceramic catalyst body comprising the ceramic body according to claim 47 which supports a catalyst component.

Claim 76 (Previously Presented): The ceramic catalyst body according to claim 75, wherein the catalyst component is a noble metal.

Claim 77 (Previously Presented): The ceramic catalyst body according to claim 76, wherein the amount of supported catalyst component is at least 0.1 g per liter.

Claim 78 (Previously Presented): The ceramic catalyst body according to claim 75 which further comprises a co-catalyst component.

Claim 79 (Previously Presented): The ceramic catalyst body according to claim 78, wherein the co-catalyst component is at least one selected from the group consisting of lanthanoid elements, transition metal elements, alkali metal elements, alkaline-earth metal elements, their oxides and compound oxides.

Claim 80 (Previously Presented): The ceramic catalyst body according to claim 79, wherein the co-catalyst component content is at least 6 g per liter.

Claim 81 (Withdrawn, Currently Amended): A method of producing a ceramic body ~~with a high specific surface area that has needle-shaped particles~~ according to Claim 47, comprising:

producing a ceramic body in which at least a portion of ~~the~~ ceramic particles comprises ~~contains~~ at least Si, Al, and Mg and has a needle-shaped morphology, using a starting material comprising a compound of SiO_2 and Al_2O_3 as an Si source.

Claim 82 (Withdrawn): The method of producing a ceramic body that has needle-shaped particles according to claim 81, wherein an acicularization additive is added.

Claim 83 (Withdrawn): The method of producing a ceramic body that has needle-shaped particles according to claim 82, wherein the acicularization additive is at least one selected from the group consisting of lanthanoid elements, transition metal elements, alkali metal elements, and alkaline-earth metal elements.

Claim 84 (Withdrawn): The method of producing a ceramic body that has needle-shaped particles according to claim 81, wherein the appearance of needle-shaped particles is induced by an acid treatment, an alkali treatment, or dry etching.

Claim 85 (Withdrawn): The method of producing a ceramic body that has needle-shaped particles according to claim 84, wherein the acid treatment that induces the appearance of needle-shaped particles is a treatment with a weak acid.

Claim 86 (Withdrawn): The method of producing a ceramic body that has needle-shaped particles according to claim 85, wherein the weak acid is a weak acid with a normality of 0.001 to 2.

Claim 87 (Withdrawn): The method of producing a ceramic body that has needle-shaped particles according to claim 85, wherein the weak acid is at least one acid selected from the group consisting of an acid containing a carboxy group (–COOH), phosphoric acid, and hydrogen sulfide.

Claim 88 (Withdrawn, Currently Amended): The method of producing a ceramic body that has needle-shaped particles according to claim 81, comprising molding a composition comprising ~~containing~~ needle-shaped particles into a desired shape and firing the composition; wherein the appearance of needle-shaped particles is induced.

Claim 89 (Withdrawn): The method of producing a ceramic body that has needle-shaped particles according to claim 81, comprising molding a starting material for forming needle-shaped particles into a desired shape and firing the starting material; wherein the appearance of needle-shaped particles is induced.

Claim 90 (Withdrawn): A method of producing a ceramic catalyst body, comprising supporting a catalyst component on a ceramic body according to claim 47.

Claim 91 (Withdrawn, Currently Amended): ~~A~~ The method of producing a ceramic catalyst body[[,]] according to claim 90 further comprising supporting a co-catalyst component on the ceramic body.

Claim 92 (Withdrawn): The method of producing a ceramic catalyst body according to claim 91, wherein the co-catalyst component is mixed into a ceramic starting material for the ceramic body.

Claim 93 (Withdrawn): The method of producing a ceramic catalyst body according to claim 90 further comprising supporting a co-catalyst component on the ceramic catalyst body.

Claim 94 (Withdrawn): The method of producing a ceramic catalyst body according to claim 93 wherein the co-catalyst component is mixed into a ceramic starting material for the ceramic catalyst body.